

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 IO-13 ISO-00 SNM-05 SS-15 PA-01 CIAE-00
INR-10 NSAE-00 OES-07 OMB-01 TRSE-00 USIE-00
INRE-00 EUR-12 SSO-00 /079 W
-----108837 211850Z /53

O R 211720Z FEB 78
FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 6462
INFO USMISSION GENEVA IMMEDIATE
WHITE HOUSE WASHDC
DEA HQS WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L BOGOTA 1629

FOR ARA AND S/NM
WHITE HOUSE FOR BOURNE
DEA FOR BENSINGER
GENEVA FOR MATHEA FALQSC

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: SNAR, CO
SUBJ: CBS TELEVISION PROGRAM ON COCAINE

1. ON THE MORNING OF FEBRUARY 24TH I WILL BE INTERVIEWED BY THE "60 MINUTES" PROGRAM OF CBS TELEVISION. I HAVE SPOKEN TO HARRY MOSES, PRODUCER FOR THE PROGRAM, AND I GATHER THAT THE ALTERNATIVE IS FOR THE CAMERA CREW TO SET UP THEIR EQUIPMENT IN FRON OF THE CHANCERY, SAY THAT THE AMBASSADOR REFUSES TO TALK TO THEM AND READ A LIST OF THE QUESTIONS THAT WOULD HAVE BEEN ASKED. THE SUBJECT IS, OF COURSE, COCAINE AND, SPECIFICALLY, CORRUPTION IN THE COLOMBIAN GOVERNMENT. MOSES IS FULLY AWARE OF THE LE MONDE STORY AND APPEARS TO HAVE DONE CONSIDERABLE RESEARCH OF HIS OWN. HIS FIRST TACK WAS TO TRY TO TIE THE VISIT OF MRS. CARTER TO THE STORY. I BELIEVE I WAS ABLE TO CONVINCE HIM THAT MRS. CARTER DID NOT PRESENT ANYTHING IN WRITING TO PRESIDENT LOPEZ AND
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DID NOT MENTION ANY NAMES IN HER CONVERSATION. MOSES IS FULLY AWARE OF THE VISIT TOZKOLONZIA OF BOURNE AND FALCO ALTHOUGH HE DID NOT MENTION BENSINGER. I TOLD HIM THAT I REFUSED TO ANSWER ANY QUESTIONS CONCERNING THE LE MONDE STORY IN VIEW OF THE DELICATE JUNCTURE WITH THE COLOMBIAN ELECTIONS. HE PROMISED TO DELETE ANY SUCH QUESTIONS FROM THE SCRIPT.

2. I PROPOSE TO RESPOND ALONG THE LINES OF PARAGRAPH 3 ON THE QUESTION OF CORRUPTION. I HAVE ASKED THE FOREIGN MINISTER TO CHECK THIS STATEMENT PERSONALLY IN ORDER TO HAVE A NATIVE AND HIGH LEVEL VIEW AS TO SPECIFIC SENSITIVITIES BEFORE GOING ON. AS WASHINGTON AGENCIES CAN PERCEIVE, I HAVE ATTEMPTED TO BALANCE SEVERAL CONSIDERATIONS INCLUDING MY FUTURE EFFECTIVENESS IN COLOMBIA AND POSSIBLE MEDIA AND CONGRESSIONAL REACTIONS IN THE U.S. IF ANY ELEMENT OF THIS RESPONSE CAUSES ANYONE UNUSUAL DIFFICULTIES OR IF THERE ARE ADDITIONAL POINTS ANYONE BELIEVES I SHOULD MAKE--OR EVEN IF IT IS BELIEVED THAT I SHOULD BE INSTRUCTED NOT TO GRANT THE INTERVIEW--PLEASE ADVISE ME IMMEDIATELY.

3. CORRUPTION SEEMS TO BE ONE OF THOSE FACETS OF THE HUMAN CONDITION THAT IS ALWAYS WITH US. OF COURSE, THERE IS CORRUPTION IN COLOMBIA AS THERE IS IN ANY NUMBER OF COUNTRIES. I BELIEVE IT IS UNJUST, HOWEVER, TO INDICT A WHOLE SOCIETY, PARTICULARLY WHEN WHATEVER CORRUPTION EXISTS CAN BE DESCRIBED AS A MIRROR IMAGE OF OUR OWN. MANY COLOMBIANS ARGUE COGENTLY THAT IF THERE WERE NO MARKET IN THE UNITED STATES AND A U.S. UNDERWORLD EAGER TO SUPPLY THAT DEMAND BY DISTRIBUTING AND FINANCING THE PRODUCTION OF ILLICIT DRUGS, THERE WOULD BE NO PROBLEM IN COLOMBIA, THE OTHER SIDE OF THE COIN IS THAT THERE ARE MANY, MANY GOOD PEOPLE IN COLOMBIA WHO ARE WORKING

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WITH US, COOPERATING WITH US, TO ELIMINATE THIS PROBLEM. THESE PEOPLE, AND MYSELF INCLUDED, ARE NOT INTERESTED IN ASSIGNING BLAME. WE ARE CONCERNED WITH THE PROBLEM, AN ISSUE THAT IS DOING SUBSTANTIAL HARM TO BOTH OUR SOCIETIES AND WE WANT TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT.

I BELIEVE THAT THE MAJOR STUMBLING BLOCK TO AN EFFECTIVE NARCOTICS INTERDICTION PROGRAM HAS BEEN THE FACT THAT COLOMBIAN INSTITUTIONS WERE NOT DESIGNED TO DEAL WITH SUCH MODERN, ESOTERIC PROBLEMS AS DRUG TRAFFICKING. OUR MAJOR EMPHASIS IN RECENT MONTHS HAS BEEN TO CREATE MORE EFFECTIVE INSTITUTIONS AND MODES OF COOPERATION, AND TO TRAIN AND EQUIP APPROPRIATELY SELECT PERSONNEL. I MIGHT ADD THAT I HAVE RECEIVED NOTHING BUT COOPERATION AND SUPPORT SINCE MY ARRIVAL IN BOGOTA FROM THE COLOMBIAN GOVERNMENT IN THIS ENDEAVOR. THIS INCLUDES A BROAD GAMUT OF OFFICIALS, FROM THE PRESIDENT ON DOWN. I CAN CITE THE FOREIGN MINISTER, THE ATTORNEY GENERAL, THE MINISTER OF JUSTICE AND A NUMBER OF OTHER OFFICIALS AT VARIOUS LEVELS.

IN A RELATED CONTEXT I BELIEVE THE NEGATIVE EFFECTS OF DRUG TRAFFICKING ARE MUCH MORE PRONOUNCED IN COLOMBIA THAN THEY ARE IN THE UNITED STATES. THE PRICE OF A

SNORT OF COCAINE IN NEW YORK IS NOW US \$100. OUR OBJECTIVE IS A REALISTIC ONE OF KEEPING THE PRICE HIGH, SO THAT IT DOES NOT BECOME A DRUG OF MASS CONSUMPTION. I AM CONFIDENT WE CAN DO THAT WITH THE MEANS AT OUR DISPOSAL. IN COLOMBIA, THE GOVERNMENT'S EFFORTS TO COPE WITH THE RATE OF INFLATION HAVE BEEN BEDEVILED BY THIS INFLUX OF EASY MONEY. IN ADDITION, THERE HAS BEEN GREAT CONCERN ON THE POSSIBLE INTRUSION IN POLITICS ON THE PART OF TRAFFICKERS, PARTICULARLY IN VIEW OF THEIR ENORMOUS LIQUIDITY. A CONSIDERABLE AMOUNT OF ATTENTION HAS BEEN EVIDENT IN THE COLOMBIAN PRESS, CONCERNING SUCH THINGS AS THE INCREASED COST OF CAMPAIGNING IN CERTAIN DISTRICTS AND THE OUTRIGHT BUYING OF EOTES. MANY POLITICAL LEADERS HAVE EXPRESSED CONCERN THAT REPRESENTATIVES DIRECTLY BEHOLDEN TO TRAFFICKERS

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WILL EMERGE IN THE NEXT LEGISLATURE. SOME ESTIMATES ARE THAT AS MANY AS TEN LEGISLATORS CAN BE ANTICIPATED IN THIS SORT OF "TRAFFICKER'S PARTY", UNLESS EFFECTIVE STEPS ARE TAKEN. THERE IS A SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY THAT THE "EMERGING CLASS", AS IT IS CALLED IN COLOMBIA, POSES A DISTINCT THREAT TO THE COLOMBIAN ESTABLISHMENT. I AM CONVINCED THAT THESE CONSIDERATIONS HAVE BEEN SERIOUSLY WEIGHED BY COLOMBIAN POLITICAL LEADERS, AND ARE ONE OF THE PROXIMATE CAUSES FOR THE PRESENT WHOLEHEARTED COOPERATION IN OUR JOINT INTERDICTION PROGRAM. IT WILL PROBABLY BE GOING TOO FAR TO SAY THAT THIS FORM OF CORRUPTION HAS PROVIDED THE GREATEST POSITIVE IMPETUS TO THE NARCOTICS PROGRAM, BUT IT IS CLEAR THAT COLOMBIAN PERCEPTIONS OF THESE PROBLEMS ARE MAKING FOR THE PRESENT HIGHLY PROMISING LEVELS OF COOPERATION.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: COCAINE, CORRUPTION, TELEVISION BROADCASTING, CENTRAL GOVERNMENT
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 21 feb 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978BOGOTA01629
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780078-0535
Format: TEL
From: BOGOTA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780234/aaaabscsm.tel
Line Count: 152
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 100d61d3-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 12 jul 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3540893
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: CBS TELEVISION PROGRAM ON COCAINE
TAGS: SNAR, SOPN, PGOV, CO, CBS
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/100d61d3-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014